



U.S. Embassy Astana

Central Asia Regional Environmental Hub Newsletter

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I. Hub Highlights

U.S.-Kazakhstan Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement Signed on April 11, 2010. (Press Release)

Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert O. Blake, Jr. and Kazakhstan's Deputy Foreign Minister Kairat Umarov, will sign the U.S.-Kazakhstan Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement on Sunday April 11, 2010, at 10:00 a.m. at the Willard Intercontinental Hotel in Washington D.C.

The United States and Kazakhstan have been cooperating on science, including non-proliferation, since 1991. The signing of the Science and Technology Agreement strengthens scientific partnership, and making it easier to conduct joint activities in education, health, biotechnology, energy, seismic research, water resource management, information technology engineering, and the environment.

The United States and Kazakhstan have been negotiating a bilateral Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement (STA) since 2003. STAs provide a framework under which agencies, ministries, institutes, universities and research centers can cooperate through an implementing Memoranda of Understanding. The Agreement also provides for exemption from taxation, customs duties, and fees for cooperative activities under the agreement.

Both President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton have advocated “science diplomacy” as an important component of U.S. foreign policy. Science has an inherent ability to bring international collaborators together regardless of nationality or political leanings.

This Agreement with Kazakhstan is the 51st bilateral Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement the United States has signed and the first with a Former Soviet Republic in the Central Asia Region.

Astana Earth Day Event A Great Success

On April 22 at 14:00, volunteers from the U.S. Embassy in Astana and QSI International School of Astana marked Earth Day by planting trees and cleaning up an area near the Palace of Peace and Concord that the Astana City Akimat has kindly provided. Over 40 volunteers showed up, including the DCM, and the press gave the event very positive coverage.



DCM Pamela Spratlen helping plant a tree

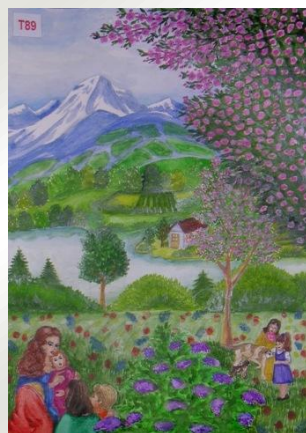


Tashkent's Earth Day Celebration

More than 70 volunteers gathered in Seattle Peace Park on April 22 to plant young trees, enjoy artwork created by school children from around Uzbekistan and celebrate Earth Day 2010, the day commemorating the founding of the modern environmental movement in the United States 40 years ago.

The group planted juniper, meta sequoia, green ash, northern catalpa, and tulip trees, all of which are species native to North America that are well adapted to the climate of Central Asia. The choice of trees seemed appropriate to decorate the park that was created as part of the ongoing Tashkent-Seattle Sister City partnership, said Natalya Shivaldova, the project coordinator for the non-governmental group Eco-Maktab (Eco-School), which organized the event with the support of the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. Eco-Maktab plans to bring groups of young people to the park to learn about the different types of trees and the environmental benefits of planting trees as part of the school's environmental education efforts, Shivaldova said.

The Earth Day activities also included an exhibit of environmental-themed drawings by students in schools around Tashkent and in Namangan, Samarkand, and Bukhara Regions. About 230 students wrote essays and created the drawings as part of environmental education classes. The drawings included bright, beautiful pictures of farmers caring for animals, a pair of hands planting a flower, and a pastoral scene of a young woman in a meadow surrounded by butterflies. One picture showed the endangered saiga antelope, while another darker one showed a family of waterbirds trying to survive in a waterway polluted by a factory.



Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne Celebrates Earth Day at Kabul Zoo

In honor of Earth Day, U.S. Embassy Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Affairs Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne visited the Kabul Zoo April 22 and participated in a program for 100 schoolchildren on endangered species in Afghanistan.

Mayor Nawhandish and educators from the Wildlife Conservation Society joined the Earth Day celebration, which brought together government leaders and environmental activists to promote environmental awareness and activism.



Amb. Wayne speaks to school children at the Kabul Zoo

Highlighting the plight of snow leopards and other endangered species, Ambassador Wayne said, “This is a problem all over the world but, here in Afghanistan, it is critical because you have so many important animals that are seriously threatened,” “But the good news is that there is growing awareness that animals and their habitats should be protected. People from all over the country have shown their respect for Afghanistan’s animals through courageous and unselfish acts.”

Ambassador Wayne also recognized Prince Mostapha Zaher, Director of Afghanistan’s National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA), for receiving an award today from the United Nations as one of the “Champions of the World for Inspiring the Environment.” He then encouraged the children to serve as champions for Afghanistan’s environment. Other speakers included Kabul Zoo Director Saqib Aziz Gul and NEPA Deputy Director Engineer Najibullah Yamin, who urged the children present to work hard to protect their environment and Afghanistan’s wildlife. Mayor Nawhandish explained his plans to expand the Kabul Zoo and to clean up the City of Kabul.

USAID-Funded Program Engages Region’s Stakeholders

In April, USAID and PSI introduced the Regional Oversight Committee for the USAID-funded Health Outreach Program that works to improve HIV and tuberculosis-related services among the most-at-risk populations in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The Regional Oversight Committee will consist of the region’s key stakeholders - representatives from the national AIDS coordinating mechanisms and TB programs, civil society, people living with HIV/AIDS, cured TB patients, and international organizations. The committee will help guide project activities, disseminate research findings, and advocate scaling-up of best practices. These efforts under the Health Outreach Program seek to help the countries to maintain the HIV epidemic from spreading to the general population and to reduce the spread of tuberculosis, which is already at epidemic levels in the region.

New Training Center for Multi-Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR TB) Opens in Almaty

Kazakhstan opened the Training Center for Management of MDR TB, created with USAID support. In 2009, Kazakhstan had 105 TB cases for each 100,000 population (nearly 18 times more than the United States). Every fifth case of TB in the country is multi-drug resistant, ranking it among 22 countries with the highest burden of MDR TB worldwide. Because MDR TB is more likely to be lethal and requires a much more complex, lengthy, and costly treatment, this center addresses a significant health care challenge. The center plans to train 10 groups of up to 30 TB specialists in the management of MDR TB each year. A USAID grantee, the KNCV TB Foundation, trained a cadre of trainers, helped prepare training materials, and provided furniture and computers for the center.

USAID Training Materials Presented at National Seminar

The Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources invited the USAID AgLinks project to present its training materials at a national conference on fruit productivity held in Ferghana Province in March. More than 250 farmers, agri-firms, and private processors specializing in nursery and fruit production from all provinces of the country participated in the seminar, giving the USAID project a unique opportunity to spread its recommendations throughout Uzbekistan. At the five-day seminar, AgLinks trainers presented two topics of immediate concern to farmers - fruit tree pruning to increase yields and pest and disease identification and control. AgLinks also introduced and disseminated its recently published pest and disease manual.

U.N. Secretary General's Statement at Semipalatinsk (Excerpt)

I have just flown over Ground Zero, standing on Ground Zero just two kilometers from the real site of nuclear tests is a very sobering experience for me. More than 450 nuclear bombs were tested here with a terrible effect on people and nature. They have totally destroyed our environment, poisoned earth, rivers, and lakes, and left children suffering from cancer and birth defects. In 1991, soon after the independence of Kazakhstan, President Nazarbayev took extraordinary leadership by closing the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site and banished all nuclear weapons. It was a visionary step, a true declaration of independence. Today, this site stands as a symbol of disarmament and hope for the future. Here today in Semipalatinsk, I call on all nuclear weapons states to follow the suit of Kazakhstan. You encouraged the United Nations General Assembly to establish August 29 as the International Day Against Nuclear Tests. The United Nations is working in Semipalatinsk to restore the area, to improve the health of the people, and to provide an environment for economic growth. Again, I urge all the leaders of the world, particularly nuclear weapon states, to work together with the United Nations to realize the aspiration and dream of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Water Scarcity and the US Forest Service International Programs

Almaz Asipjano of the U.S. Agency for International Development in Kyrgyzstan and Mariya Genina of Central Asia Regional Environmental Centre in Kazakhstan attended the U.S. Forest Service International Seminar on Watershed Management in Arizona. The presentation examined water scarcity in Central Asia and explored some of the challenges facing the five

republics in improving water resource management. The talk discussed innovative donor and NGO initiatives in Central Asia designed to address these challenges and enhance management of watersheds, including local-level water user associations and a new market-based payment for ecosystem service program. It provided a great overview of the issues facing Central Asia in this area.

II. Other News

Note: Baktiyor Mukhamadiev's excellent **Weekly Central Asian ESTH News**, sent from our Tashkent office, contains most of the news events that are happening in the region. This section modestly supplements his reporting.

Afghanistan

Regional Energy Cooperation

Recent increases in imports of power to Afghanistan have been essential in enhancing access to electricity in the country. There is still great opportunity for improvement, Dr. Jalil Shams, CEO of the Afghan national electric utility Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS) recently told visiting Assistant Secretary of State Robert O. Blake. A/S Blake stressed continued U.S. Government support to DABS and the Government of Afghanistan in negotiations with neighbors. Dr. Shams stated that Afghanistan's access to electricity has increased greatly since 2001, and he thanked the United States for contributing to these improvements. Priced at between 2 to 6 cents a kilowatt hour (kwh), relatively inexpensive power from neighboring countries has been important for Afghanistan's development. Of particular importance have been imports from Uzbekistan, which have grown from approximately 70 megawatts (MW) in 2009 to approximately 125 MW today. Turkmenistan and Tajikistan have also contributed, with the latter providing between 2 to 20 MW of power. A recently negotiated Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Tajikistan coupled with Asian Development Bank (ADB) infrastructure investments will allow for a significant expansion of imports from Tajikistan by April 2011.

Afghan Women Get The Opportunity To Take The Reins In Agriculture Production Via USAID Support

The USG agriculture program seeks to improve food security, increase commercial agriculture opportunities, improve agricultural productivity, create rural employment, and increase family incomes and well-being. The U.S. Mission is directing resources to improve technology, competitiveness, post-harvest activities, and public institutions in this sector. Over 80 percent of Afghan women participate in farming in some fashion. In the agriculture sector, women and children care for livestock and perform much of the field work and are therefore the primary income producers in their families. The U.S. funded project, Afghanistan Farm Service Alliance (AFSA), is a two-year Global Development Alliance (GDA) with the U.S. based NGO, Citizen's Network for Foreign Affairs (CNFA). This project established the first woman-owned and operated Afghan Farm Service Center (FSC), a centrally located agricultural input and service

provider for Kabul and neighboring provinces. The U.S. is providing \$34,000 through FY 2009 funding; FSC owners are contributing infrastructure, seeds and fertilizers and other agriculture tools. A fully functional farm store will provide products and services without discrimination to women customers. Access to these products will improve the livelihood of the entire Afghan farming community.

Graduation Of Afghanistan's First Masters Of Education

On March 10, the Kabul Education University celebrated the graduation of 41 candidates (including 19 women) for the degree of Master of Education, the first graduates of an internationally recognized Masters of Education Program in Afghanistan. The Acting Minister of Higher Education, Sawar Danish, as well as Ambassador Eikenberry and the USG Education Team attended the ceremony, which marks an important milestone in the advancement of higher education in Afghanistan.

The Afghan Wheat Crop

The Afghan Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) has become the pivot point for international cooperation to improve wheat disease resistance, prepare for wheat disease control and eradication, as well as partner with international technical experts and other countries facing similar challenges. A 21-24 February conference in Kabul on urgent challenges to combat wheat stem rust (UG99) in the Afghan crop organized by the International Wheat and Maize Improvement Center. Participants signed off on an action plan for the next 18-24 months that includes buy-in from major international institutions and regional countries facing similar problems, under the leadership of MAIL. The workshop also decided to tackle the challenge of monitoring for UG99 in the current wheat crop and positioning resources to control and eradicate if necessary. Longer term outcomes should result in Afghanistan developing its capacity to produce high yielding wheat varieties that are resistant to UG99 and other pathogens. Afghanistan relies on imports to provide some thirty percent of its wheat needs. A domestic crop reduced by disease would put additional pressure to import wheat, something that cannot be expected to easily satisfy domestic demand.

Endangered Snow Leopard Dies From Trauma Of Illegal Capture, Endangered List Grows

Ironically, just three days after the Afghan National Environmental Protection agency (NEPA) added fourteen new species to its endangered species list, a snow leopard illegally captured in Badakhshan died after a joint Afghan-USG rescue effort. The snow-leopard's death strikes a blow for the species: the International Union for the Conservation of Nature estimates that there are only 100-200 snow leopards in Afghanistan, and only about 5,000 in the world. NEPA head Mostapha Zaher acknowledges that wildlife protection is difficult in a war-torn country, but he is proud of recent successes, including Wildlife Conservation Society-supported ranger training, and an endangered species list that includes 48 species (including the snow leopard, the Asiatic cheetah, the large-billed reed warbler, and the Marco Polo sheep). The snow-leopard incident has brought wider attention to conservation in Afghanistan and refocused USG efforts on the elimination of illegal marketing of endangered species.

Implications Of Low Snowfall On Afghan Food Security

Up to 80 percent of Afghanistan's wheat crop relies on snow melt for irrigation. In an average year, the mountainous areas of the Central Highlands and Northeast accumulate 30 to 150 centimeters of snowpack (depending on elevation) during the critical winter months of December, January, and February. As temperatures begin to rise in March, steady snow melt through May provides a significant portion of the water needed to irrigate Afghanistan's wheat crop. However, due to higher than normal temperatures during December 2009 through February, these areas, to date, have only received 10-60 centimeters of snowpack. This dry period has raised concerns that the quantity of snow accumulated will be insufficient for the 2010 agricultural growing season. Besides low snow levels, unusually high temperatures in December and January caused existing snow to melt. Early snow melt has further reduced the amount of water that will be available for irrigation later this year. Despite last year's bumper crop, the 2010 food security outlook does not look as optimistic due to the poor climatic conditions to date.

Kazakhstan

U.S. Funds The Construction Of Central Reference Laboratory In Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan began work yesterday on a high-tech laboratory in Almaty intended to aid global efforts to identify, assess and respond to naturally occurring disease outbreaks and biological weapon attacks. The US Cooperative Threat Reduction program is funding this project. "This laboratory is the culmination of cooperation to safely and securely store disease pathogens and develop a robust disease detection and surveillance network," US Defense Threat Reduction Agency Director Kenneth Myers said in a released statement at the ceremonial groundbreaking. "Kazakhstan's Central Reference Laboratory will dramatically increase the security of Kazakhstan's collections of especially dangerous pathogens and strengthen the scientific capabilities of Kazakhstani and Central Asian scientists," the US Ambassador to Kazakhstan said. The \$103 million laboratory is set to house highly secure Bio-safety Level 2 and 3 research areas containing state-of-the-art molecular diagnostic and research equipment for the study of contagious animal and human diseases.

Chinese 'Patriotic' Underwear A Hit In Kazakhstan

March 16. Radio Free Europe. They may not be as outrageous as the lime-green mankini worn by Borat, yet a new line of Chinese-made men's underwear is proving a hit in Kazakhstan, while infuriating many others. The boxer-briefs come in black, gray, and other colors with a Kazakh flag printed inside a Kazakh map. They also have a rather bright waistband in the blue and yellow colors of Kazakhstan's flag, complete with an inscription -- "Kazakhstan" -- and a yellow eagle, the symbol of the country. The underwear has become a hot seller in Kazakh markets, although not for their patriotic design, but like most Chinese-made goods, they're cheap. The "Beibars" shopping center in the central town of Karaganda is even selling cheap Chinese night clothes featuring the Kazakh flag. Some Kazakhs are not happy, though, seeing the themed underwear as yet another sign of Chinese encroachment. For instance, Qayirbai-aksaal, a Karaganda resident, told RFE/RL's Kazakh Service that he finds them "insulting." Chinese-

made goods have become a source of concern in Central Asia in recent years as many people believe they are squeezing more pricey domestic products out of the market. Chinese merchandise is often up to 3-5 times cheaper than locally made goods. Kazakh hackles went up late last year when President Nursultan Nazarbaev said that China is interested in renting 1 million hectares of land in Kazakhstan for farming purposes. That led to protests among opposition activists and nationalist groups. It is a widespread belief in the region that only those who cannot afford higher-quality brands will purchase Chinese clothing. But judging by the hordes of savvy shoppers, the Chinese underwear hawkers aren't likely to go out of business any time soon.

Austrian Nurses Are More Skilful Than Kazakh Doctors - President

March 6. Kazakhstan Today. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev says the [professional] level of Kazakh physicians is lower than that of Austrian female nurses. "When the management of a complex of medical centers was handed over to an Austrian company, they invited physicians, doctors, female and male nurses from there. The level of our physicians is lower than that of the female nurses, who came from there," Nazarbayev said. In this respect, the Kazakh president said that it was necessary to improve the quality of education in the sphere of [medical] personnel training. "I do not want to offend our universities, but their programs are no good."

Smithsonian Curator Visits Kazakhstan

Representatives of the Smithsonian Institution are gathering materials for an internet-exhibition about Kazakhstan's prominent public and political figures. The director of the institution's Department of Asian Culture, Paul Taylor, arrived in Kokshetau to research the life and work of the Kazakh scholar, historian, ethnographer, folklorist, educator, and explorer of the nineteenth century, Shokan Valikhanov. The online exhibition will kick off on April 14 on the Smithsonian Institution's web site, and will coincide with a festival of Kazakh culture which will be held in the United States. "Millions of users from the United States and other countries visit our site, therefore the collected material will open Kazakhstan and its icons," said Taylor.

Kyrgyzstan

UN Chief Pledges Help To Resolve Water, Energy Problems In Kyrgyzstan

April 3. Bishkek 24.kg. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is urging the leaders of Central Asian states to discuss water and energy problems in the region. He made this statement today at a meeting with Prime Minister Daniyar Usenov held as part of his official visit to the Kyrgyz Republic. He said that countries of Central Asia were unable to resolve the problems of their energy resources individually. "The United Nations will provide every possible support for the states of this region in establishing preventive dialogue," Ban Ki-moon said.

Tajikistan

Tajik Aluminum Firm Says Uzbek Protests Against Emissions Unjustified

5 April. Khovar. The state unitary Tajik aluminum company (TALCO) plans to carry out its international environmental assessment in summer 2010, the head of TALCO's press service Sayohat Qodirova said. This environmental assessment is conducted every year with the assistance of leading international environmental companies, she said. "The assessment will examine the company's impact on the environment after its modernization. Now preparatory work is under way, and the future commission [for the assessment] is being formed. This year the company's business plan comprises investing 30m somoni [about 7m dollars] on environmental issues. The amount was 29.4m somoni in 2009. The international assessment will detect whether the company meets all international environmental standards," Sayohat Qodirova added. Last week activists from the Environmental Movement of Uzbekistan staged protests against the expansion of production in the Tajik aluminum plant and against its environmental emissions. "These actions against Tajikistan's aluminum giant are unjustified," Sayohat Qodirova said. At the moment, the company is being updated (its equipment and technologies are being changed), and 196m dollars were spent for these purposes over past four years.

Tajikistan's Priorities Are Power Generation, Food Security

March 16. Moscow ITAR-TASS. Tajik leader Emomali Rakhmon said three strategic directions would be the priority for this country within the next few years: attaining energy and food security and pulling out of transport isolation. "I've instructed the government to study the programs of all the right political parties of the republic, and work out a uniform government program for the country's economic development on their basis. In the near future, the main strategic directions for Tajiksitan are attaining food and energy security and pulling out of transport isolation," the Tajik leader said. He reminded that the country was building dozens of hydroelectric power stations, including the Rogun HPP, the largest in the region, and that foreign capital participated in the construction of transport tunnels and modern highways.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan Holds Conference on Creating Artificial Desert Lake

April 11. Radio Free Europe. A two-day international conference on the creation of a lake in Turkmenistan's Karakum Desert was held in the western port city of Turkmenbashi, RFE/RL's Turkmen Service reports. Participating scientists and specialists at the conference assessed the anticipated impact of the lake on the region's ecosystem. Kyrgyz water resources expert Kayrat Moldashev told RFE/RL's Turkmen Service that he welcomes the Turkmen government's initiative in solving its water problems. At the same time, Moldashev warned of the possible negative impact on the entire region of collecting water in a natural basin. "It is necessary to make ecological testing of the impact of the lake with the participation of international experts," Moldashev said. The project to create the 2,000-square-kilometer Altyn Asyr Lake was first announced in 2000 by then-Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov. Niyazov died in December

2006. Turkmenistan believes the multibillion project will facilitate irrigation and ensure the effective management of water resources, thus contributing to the development of the country's agricultural output. The Karakum Desert makes up some 70 percent of the area of Turkmenistan.

USAID Supports Maternal And Child Health Reforms In Turkmenistan

The process of Maternal and Child Health reform in Turkmenistan was started in 1994 to address the country's needs in effective and improved health services to decrease high levels of child and maternal mortality. To this end, the World Health Organization recommended implementing and institutionalizing world tested approaches of evidence-based medicine, such as Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses, Effective Perinatal Care and Antenatal Care. Through its ZdravPlus I and II projects (1999-2009), USAID helped Turkmenistan to implement these approaches in selected pilot locations and later to institutionalize them in cooperation with Turkmenistan's Ministry of Healthcare and Medical Industry. Continued engagement in the health sector is critical to ensure past advances are consolidated and achieve further progress. USAID's upcoming Health Improvement Project will allow for opportunities to carry on this critical work.

Turkmenistan Government Supports Increased Rice Production

On March 18, President Berdimuhamedov signed a decree authorizing the State Grain Products Association to purchase large amounts of rice from farmers' unions (former kolkhozes) to meet the needs of state agencies. The president's decree did not specify the amount of rice to be purchased this year. The amount purchased last year was also never made public. However, in order to stimulate domestic rice production, in January 2009 Berdimuhamedov increased the price paid by the state to rice farmers from 200 manat (\$70) per ton to 900 manat (\$316). The Turkmen government increased production of rice from 60,000 tons in 2007 to 70,000 tons in 2008 by increasing the allotted area from 13,000 hectares to 18,000 hectares.

Turkmenistan's Pharmaceuticals Market

Turkmenistan has both state-owned and commercial pharmacies. The commercial pharmacies offer a wider variety of pharmaceuticals at various price ranges and from different producers. European medications are widely considered the best quality, but they are also the most expensive. Their prices range from \$40 to \$200 per package. The most affordable are pharmaceuticals made by Pakistani, Indian and Chinese companies. Their prices range from \$5 to \$10 per package. Medications made in Ukraine and Russia usually fall in the middle of the price range. Neither the state-owned nor commercial pharmacies in Turkmenistan require a doctor's prescription for purchasing medications. The only exception to this is that state-owned pharmacies require customers to present a prescription, certified by the head of the healthcare institution, to receive a government insurance discount of 90 percent. The list of drugs that are subject to the discount is limited and includes only antibiotics, vitamins, cardiologic drugs and metabolic stimulants. Despite being able to purchase medications without a prescription, most Turkmen consult a doctor to get recommendations for the appropriate medications before going to the pharmacy.

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan Agree To Conduct International Assessment For Water-Energy Projects

March 17. The Times of Central Asia. Uzbek and Kazakh Presidents Islam Karimov and Nursultan Nazarbayev agreed on the need to conduct an international assessment of the construction of Rogun and Kambarata hydroelectric power stations, they said at a joint press-conference after the talks. According to the Uzbek president, the intention to build a large water-power facilities without competent engineering assistance in the area where earthquakes measuring 9 are possible causes anxiety. "I think if actions are not taken to prevent possible accidents, it can lead to irreparable consequences and tragedies", Islam Karimov said. "We stand for an international examination of water and energy facilities, including Rogun and Kambarata for the security of our peoples", the Kazakh President said. He stressed that an independent international expert assessment must answer a number of issues: whether the construction of these facilities is dangerous in the geological plan, whether it will affect the streams, which are essential for both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. He said that before arrival he spoke with Tajik and Kyrgyz presidents. "I heard that they are ready for such an assessment, Nursultan Nazarbayev said. I think we must welcome their decision. If the assessment gives positive results, then Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will be ready to participate in the consortium for the construction of these facilities," he said.

Uzbekistan Workshop Assesses Climate Change Risk To Energy Sector

March 25. Tashkent UzReport. The World Bank, together with the Government of Uzbekistan, conducted a workshop on 24 March on climate change risks and vulnerability of Uzbekistan's energy sector. The workshop brought together many of the key stakeholders in Uzbekistan's energy sector, including government ministries and agencies, utilities and corporations, private companies, expert consultants and university academics, as well as energy sector experts from the World Bank and other international organizations. World Bank Country Manager for Uzbekistan Loup Brefort, commented: "The objective of the workshop is to develop a shared understanding among all stakeholders of the climate risks, uncertainties and vulnerabilities of Uzbekistan's energy sector. By analyzing the areas of the energy sector where Uzbekistan might be at risk from climate change, we can identify and more quickly implement solutions that manage the risks. We understand that Uzbekistan has opportunities to build in resilience for climate change when planning and designing new energy infrastructure. The World Bank will continue bringing international experience to Uzbekistan and to work in close partnership with the Government and energy sector to deliver a hands-on, participatory vulnerability and adaptation assessment." Uzbekistan's Second National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2008) highlighted some key impacts of climate change on the country's energy sector. For instance, the National Communication identified the effects of rising temperatures on energy demand for heating and cooling. It estimated that rising temperatures could shorten the average duration of the heating season by 8% to 9% by 2030, compared to the baseline 1971-2000. The duration of the cooling season would increase by 16% by 2030, which will affect energy consumption for air conditioning. It will be important to identify specific adaptation measures that need to be considered in the energy sector. For

instance, the National Communication refers to considering climate change when revising energy consumption rates and encouraging the manufacture and import of machinery and equipment better suited to a warmer climate.

State Media Touts Growth of Internet in Uzbekistan

Major state media outlets recently published an article touting the growth of internet and communication technology in Uzbekistan. The article positively assessed these developments and included no mention of any negative aspects of Internet usage. This breaks from earlier state media reports on Internet usage which were less sanguine in their analysis of the Internet. This suggests that there may be debate within the GOU regarding the Internet's potential impact on society. It also suggests that there may be elements of the GOU who would be receptive to the State Department's Internet Freedom agenda.

Restoration Of Polluted Airfields In Khorezm Province

The U.S. Embassy funded a project to identify and, if possible, clean up heavily polluted fields that used to be agricultural airfields during the Soviet era. Agricultural airfields hosted small airplanes that routinely sprayed toxic fertilizers and chemicals on surrounding farmland. This practice stopped after independence, but the toxic chemicals and pesticides remain in the soil and continue to pose health risks. Former airfields are now farmland, and poor farmers have no choice but to use this land to grow crops that are subsequently sold in local markets as well as large urban centers. This is a problem in all of Central Asia, since small airfields were used to spray pesticides throughout the region.

IV. Upcoming Events

June 8-10: Dushanbe: "Water For Life" Water Conference

Sept 27-October 2: Astana: Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development

Central Asia Regional Environmental Hub

The Central Asia Regional Environment Officer (REO) is responsible for monitoring and reporting on trans-boundary environment, science, technology, and health issues in six countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan.

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Regional Hub Website and Past Newsletters

[Pending]